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PRESS ADVISORY

SMITH FAMILY AND PUBLIC INTEREST ORGANIZATIONS TO TAKE CORONER TO COURT AT ASHLEY SMITH INQUEST

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Yesterday, March 28, 2011, Dr. Bonita Porter, Coroner at the Inquest into the Death of Ashley Smith, ruled that the abuse suffered by Ashley Smith at Joliette Institution, less than 90 days before her death, is not relevant to the Inquest. As a result, the jury will not hear evidence about these horrific events. Dr. Porter ruled that she neither needed to obtain nor review the videos. These videos depict the mentally ill nineteen year old being illegally injected with anti-psychotic drugs while being restrained to a gurney for hours on end without basic IV and hygiene protocols being followed. Dr. Porter also refused requests to issue a summons to the Commissioner of Correctional Services to produce the Joliette videos and other evidence of Ashley being abused including the usage of duct tape to restrain her during transfers.

The Smith Family, and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, supported by the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth will go to Court and challenge Dr. Porter's ruling in judicial review proceedings before the Ontario Divisional Court.

After the release of the ruling, Coralee Smith, Ashley's mother, responded: **"I am devastated that it has come to this. I have been fighting for the last four years for only one thing: that the truth be known about how my daughter was abused in the Federal prison system. My family and I suffer with this every day. We had hoped that the November ruling to expand the inquest would mean that we could trust that a full inquiry into the circumstances of Ashley's death would happen. Now we have completely lost confidence in this process. The jury will not hear the full story and that's why we have to go to Court. My daughter deserves no less."**

Kim Pate, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies reacted: **"If Dr. Porter has seen the video tapes, then it is impossible to believe that she could not see them as a crucial to the jury's deliberations. If she has not seen them, then it is mystifying that she is willing to rule on such vital and contemporaneous records of Ashley's treatment. The Joliette videos should not be suppressed. Together with Ashley's family and the Province's Child Advocate, we will be seeking judicial review of this ruling. To fail to do so, would be to unconscionable."**

For further information, please contact:

The Smith Family: *Julian Falconer of Falconer Charney LLP at (416) 964-3408, ext. 248.*

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